

## Good night wherever you are...

"Dad! How did you get to Sweden?, the boy asked the dark-haired man.

"Tommy when I was running away from Czechoslovakia everything was so hard, the system was so strange. The correct word would be - absurd, if you understand what I mean. I did not understand it! When I realized that I cannot change it then I decided to do everything to escape from it! My decision was so strong. I was determined that I would rather clean windows for the rest of my life than to stay here" - he answered - sitting on the armchair and his son on the floor."

"Tommy, you should know that I was planning the action for a long time. To make it short – 2 steps were important. 1. To get a place on a trip to Finland, 2. To receive all permissions needed at that time for travelling abroad. My plan started to work when I got in a bus to Helsinki..."

### **Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> July 1997**

*That day we reached Helsinki. When I finally got out from the bus, I was looking around me. Everything was so different. My heart was beating so fast that I thought it would have jumped out of my chest. It was mysterious. I did not remember the name of the hotel because I was "in a kind of a fog". My mind was busy, I thought just of "My plan".*

### **Saturday, 10<sup>th</sup> July 1997**

*The sightseeing around Helsinki, the capital city of Finland, helped me. I started to get oriented. In my head I tried to remember the location of each embassy we saw. I found six of them! They were quite far away from our hotel. I was preparing to visit them and tried to figure out how to do it.*

*My plan was interrupted when we reached the Alvar Alto's village. One of my dreams came true! I was always dreaming to see it. It was so beautiful. You'll never find something like that in Czechoslovakia.*

"Who is Alvar Alto?" asked son the dark-haired man between sentences.

"It was my favourite architecture. His projects were so charming for me.", he explained his memory.

"And now the story, please!" screamed Tommy. His dad just smiled for a while. So eager, he is.

*My plan was easy: We will stay for three days in Helsinki after that is a tour to city Tampere. On Thursday we are back in Helsinki then free Friday and on Saturday morning is trip back to Prague. BUT at that time I will be on the boat to Sweden or on a way somewhere else. This was my plan, my son.*

*Back in the hotel room I jumped into the bed. I thought - during the whole journey to Finland there must be somebody who is watching us. You know, it was common at that time. I was wondering. Who is the political accompaniment? There must be someone! A long time I was projecting in my mind all the faces from the bus but at the end I walked to the leader of the trip. We were in an argument for a few minutes*

*because I want to stay alone. I explained him that I wanted to stay in Helsinki. After few minutes I got the permission.*

*You are right Tommy. He had the same condition of course. I had to be back at the hotel on Thursday otherwise I would be in a serious trouble.*

### **Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> July 1979**

*Tommy, my plan was conducted well. The bus was on the way to Tampere without me and I could start! In my pocket there were just three hundred Finnish crowns. The previous days I was looking around to know price.. I found out that it was not that much - I must spare!*

*Tommy, maybe you can imagine. My mind went into overdrive. The last chance to leave Finland was on Friday. They might announce search after me on Thursday. If some Finnish policemen could stop me, I should know what to say.. I cannot think of it. I had to stop. I tried not to think....*

*I left the hotel and my plan was to never return. Never ever! I did not know where I could sleep. Should I sleep in a park? No way, too dangerous. I cannot go around the city day and night. I must find a cheap hotel.*

"What happened? What did you do?" asked his curious son.

"I was so scared! ", he whispered, "I remember that at that moment I was determined as never before. But I would do it again and again." The boy heard it well.

*The story continues.*

*My first embassy visit was the Swedish. On the way I met two policemen - they must have seen my frightened face but they let me enter the Swedish embassy. I filled some papers in that I controlled for thousand times. They took them from me. I must be back there on Wednesday for their answer.*

*Now the time came for the other embassies- The French, American, Belgian, British - those ones said no.*

*The hotel I chose was a cheap one and close to the embassies. I must have waited for the answer from the Swedish. The rest of the days I was sleeping or walking around the city. My hunger was big and sleeping helped just a little.*

"Hunger? What hunger" Tommy was confused.

"Well. I spent most of my money for the hotel. All week I had just money for one loaf of bread and I slept to stop feeling the hunger. My stomach was yelling like a tiger." .....the son was staring at his father. Suddenly the father stomach rumbled. Tommy and his father started to laugh.

"Daddy, please continue..."

*The following day I visited other embassies. It was Canadian, Swiss and Australian. They wanted me to wait until Monday. Waiting? No way for me! I cannot take the risk.*

### **Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> July 1979**

*Time to go to the Swedish embassy.*

*I came back to the hotel room with bad news! I didn't get the permission to travel. Why? They were afraid of my stay in Sweden. The same day I decided to go to Sweden illegally.*

*To action immediately! I found a train to harbor Turku. My plan was to take the boat from there. Before I bought the ticket, I came out from the station. I had to think.*

*I was walking down the streets. Then someone stopped me, he was asking something. It was an old man, he started to speak to me. Tommy, I do not know if it was luck or fate - the man helped me.*

*We talked. I told him about my plan to visit Stockholm and that I wanted to go by boat from Turku. He explained to me that there was another harbor - he said that it would be easier to get on the boat. He also said it was used by the Scandinavians and to get a ticket would be cheaper if I booked it together with the train ticket. He also said it was not going directly to Stockholm but it would be safer.*

*I do think about this man quite often! Did he know what my plan was? Maybe yes, maybe no. But I will never forget!*

*Then I went to the station and spent almost all my money to buy the train and boat ticket.*

### **Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1979**

*My train left Helsinki. My real target was harbor Naantali.*

*The train started to be late but boat was waiting, said the conductor. I was so nervous. All the way I was looking out of the window. The boat was waiting forty minutes for our arrival. When the train finally stopped in Naantali, it stopped 100 meters from the boat. But between the train and the boat there were a lot of policemen. But they were so kind! They just helped us to move fast to the boat. I mean to the custom office. Thank to the late arrival there was a big chaos around the boat.*

*I saw a group of Swedish boys and girls. I went to them and walked with them. They were talking, joking and just went through the custom office and I was with them. Nobody did control us or our passports. I was lucky!*

*On the boat I was still nervous. Imagine if the Czech trip leader went to the action and started the search after me or if the Swedish embassy informed about me somehow - if they sent an echo to someone who would send me back to Czechoslovakia. I was scared. I told myself - you must be prepared for everything!*

*I was on the boat and happily waving good bye to Finland. But I was still not safe, I didn't win yet. I had to wait a few more hours before I reached the Swedish border on the sea. Suddenly policemen stopped near to me. My mind turned black but they just said hello and continued their way. Then I realized it hadn't been a policeman but the captain of the boat!*

*Short break in Mariehamn - still Finland. We continue and know we are going to Sweden! The most important part of my journey was behind me. They could not send me back!*

*I took my last money and walked into one of the bars. I bought a drink – it was Bloody Mary. It was disgusting, I didn't like the taste. By I didn't care! I was happy!*

**Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1979**

*It was morning, 7.10 and I was going out of the boat in Sweden in harbor called Kapellskar. The first part of my plan was behind me but another part was waiting for me but this is another chapter of my life, Tommy.*